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Donald H. Crosby



And the Question of Conspiracy

Lonely Man in the Middle

It took 27 years, but David Belin, writing with Gerald R. Ford, has finally said one thing with which I agree: Nigel Turner's A&E network series "The Men Who Killed Kennedy" and Oliver Stone's current commercialization and exploitation of that great tragedy are both very, very bad ["Kennedy Assassination: How About the Truth?" op-ed, Dec. 19].

I am responsible for what Stone has converted into a nonexisting "establishment" press-CIA conspiracy to destroy him and his movie. I gave reporter George Lardner Oliver Stone's script, which is based on former New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison's fantasy of self-justification, his book "On the Trail of the Assassins," Belin, as he has in the past and with the same cliches, insists that he and the Warren Commission were right solely because they say they were right.

Like other defenders of the Warren report, Belin demanded, "Where is the new evidence?" As I showed in my first book of 26 years ago, "Whitewash: The Report on the Warren Report," no new evidence was needed because the evidence the commission had disproves its conclusions. It is not easy, but Belin is being unfair to Jim Garrison. To do this he had to contradict the most basic conclusion of the Warren Report that he insists is the truth, the sequence of and time permitted for the three shots that in all official "solutions" Lee Harvey Oswald fired.

Belin writes that "Garrison speaks only of three shots being fired within 5 to 5.6 seconds." Garrison did not write that. The commission itself did—without any Belin dissent. Now that Belin can no longer pretend not to know that the world's best shots, including the "masters" used by the commission, could not duplicate the shooting attributed to Oswald within the commission's 5.6 seconds, he conjectures—in open contradiction of the report he insists was accurate—that "the most probable time span of Oswald's three shots was around 10 seconds."

As in the past Belin repeats what is not true, not even possible, that there is "unequivocal ballistics evidence which shows that ... the bullet that passed through President Kennedy's neck and struck Gov. Connally" was fired by Oswald from the rear.

There is no such evidence, ballistic or otherwise. This is

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the theory invented by now Sen. Arlen Specter, known as the "single-bullet theory" featuring "the magic bullet."

Belin refers to all the supposed experts who confirmed this official fiction. He is careful not to refer to the actual findings of a Department of Justice panel of the most preeminent forensic pathologists. I published every word of what they filed in facsimile in my "Post Mortem" in 1975. Belin had it and was reading it that November when we debated at Vanderbilt University.

The report on the examination of the JFK autopsy pictures and X-rays by this panel of experts proves the commission was wrong in locating the fatal wound in the president's head; it was four inches higher than the commission said.

That magic and unscarred bullet, that Belin says inflicted seven nonfatal wounds on both victims, smashing one of Connally's ribs and his wrist, and did not strike bone that would have deflected it as it transited the president's neck, actually deposited five bone fragments in that area.

It was already a physical impossibility for this magic bullet to have the imagined career indispensable to the lone-assassin "solution." But if any bullet had entered Kennedy's back, the commission knowingly mislocated the hole it left. That hole is four or more inches lower than the commission said and in the back, not the neck. This is verified in some of the "new" evidence, which I published and Belin had—the official certificate of death.

The rest of the official career of this magical bullet, and there is nothing like this career in science or mythology, is that in transiting the president's neck from back to front it went through the president's shirt collar and the knot of his tie. It did not, and some of the commission and its staff, including Belin, knew it.

Specter questioned Charles Carrio, the only doctor who saw the president before any emergency procedure in Parkland Hospital and before any of his clothing was removed. Specter did not ask Carrio where the anterior neck wound was located. Former CIA director and commission member Allan Dulles then did ask this question.

Carrio pointed to above his collar! Those 19 Humpty-Dumpty's Belin refers to as experts cannot alter this truth, which destroys the commission's

can only hope that the individuals who are attacked. As for me, response from the individuals who are attacked. As for me, kindly have courage to refer to me by name the next time.

—Cyril H. Wecht

The writer is chairman of the department of pathology at Central Medical Center and Hospital in Pittsburgh.

conclusions. With the bullet hole "above" the shirt collar, it could not have caused the damage to the collar and tie.

If the commission had done its job, it would have gotten what I did via the Freedom of Information Act, a clear picture of the damage to the president's shirt collar.

With the button and the button hole exactly in line and with the pattern at each end of the collar also coinciding exactly, the damages to the "ends of the collar that overlapped when buttoned as it was do not coincide, as they would have if caused by a bullet.

The damage to each side is a slit, not a hole made by a bullet. Both slits are frayed. On the president's right, as worn, the slit begins below the neckband and extends downward. It is only about half the length of the slit in the left side as worn. This larger slit extends upward well onto the neckband, to where, if caused by a bullet, it would have struck the button.

The button is unscathed. The damage to the shirt was not caused by any bullet. It was caused, as the commission's transcript indicates, in emergency procedures. Carrio demonstrated this for me by grasping his own tie with his left hand and making cutting motions upward and downward with his right hand. He told me what he was not asked by the commission, that two nurses under his supervision cut the tie off with a scalpel. There was no time to untie the knot. It was the scalpel that made the slits in the shirt collar.

Fewer pontifications from Belin would make less appropriate when applied to him his castigations of Stone and Turner, who deserve it also: "False charges ... are a desecration to the memory of President Kennedy."

The Stones of one extreme and the Belins of the other confuse, mislead and deceive the people.

What gets lost in all this controversy is that there is a middle ground. I confess loneliness in my occupancy of it. It is the ground that finds the commission failed us and proves this with fact and official documentation. It also finds that the proliferating conspiracy theories mislead and confuse as much as or more than the faulted official conclusions.

—Harold Weisberg